

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5801

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 1593

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MT

SUBJ: EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL TEAM

REF: STATE 217784, 201425, 187604, VALLETTA 1430

1. IN VIEW OF MINTOFF'S DIRECT APPROACH TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ELLSWORTH SEEKING STATE FUNDING OF TRAVEL COSTS OF U.S. EOD TEAM, EMBASSY BELIEVES FOLLOWING SITREP ON LUQA AIRPORT EXTENSION PROJECT WOULD BE USEFUL.

2. SINCE ORIGINAL DISCOVERY OF UNEXPLODED WW II BOMBS AT AIRPORT IN EARLY JULY, GOM HAS, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, APPROACHED AT LEAST FOUR GOVERNMENTS FOR EOD ASSISTANCE (BRITISH, ITALIAN, GERMAN, AND AMERICAN). BRITISH MADE INITIAL SURVEY OF AIRPORT AREA IN JULY WITH EOD TEAM BOUND FOR CYPRUS, BUT PLEADED INABILITY PROVIDE FURTHER ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF IRA PROBLEM IN U.K. AND CYPRUS CRISIS. ITALIANS HAVE LOANED GOM TOTAL OF FIVE EOD DETECTORS, WHICH ARE BEING USED BY ARMED FORCES MALTA (AFM) TO SWEEP AREA IN ACCORDANCE WITH BRITISH SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS. SEVERAL ADDITIONAL BOMBS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED AND REMOVED BY AFM IN PAST TWO MONTHS. GERMANS, AFTER THEIR AMBASSADOR HERE WAS INFORMED BY GOM THAT USG AND ITALIANS WERE PROVIDING THEIR ASSISTANCE "FREE OF CHARGE" HAVE RECENTLY AGREED TO LEND GOM FOUR ADDITIONAL DETECTORS AND PROVIDE TWO GERMAN EXPERTS, DUE ARRIVE MALTA ABOUT OCTOBER 14, TO WORK WITH AFM TO EXPEDITE CLEARANCE PROJECT. CONSEQUENTLY, EOD PROBLEM IS NOW MUCH MORE IN HAND THAN WAS

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THE CASE WHEN GOM ORIGINALLY ASKED FOR USG ASSISTANCE.

3. FOR THE RECORD, DURING EARLY DISCUSSIONS WITH GOM CONCERNING HELP USG MIGHT PROVIDE, EMBASSY DID TELL MALTESE THAT TRAVEL EXPENSES OF U.S. EOD TEAM LEADER FROM SIGONALLA TO MALTA FOR ON-SITE SURVEY OF SITUATION COULD BE FUNDED BY USG. THIS WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARA 3 OF STATE 187604. HOWEVER, WHEN SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE INDICATED USCINCEUR FUNDING THIS TRAVEL NOT POSSIBLE, EMBASSY SO INFORMED GOM. LATER, FOLLOWING RECEIPT STATE 201425, EMBASSY FURTHER INFORMED GOM IT HAD BEEN DETERMINED BY STATE/DEFENSE AFTER FULL REVIEW THAT COST OF ANY USG ASSISTANCE WOULD HAVE TO BE BORNE BY GOM. EMBASSY EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THE USG WILLING ASSIST ON REIMBURSABLE BASIS, IF GOM SO DESIRED.

4. CONSIDERING MINTOFF'S APPEAL TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY ELLSWORTH, IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT MINTOFF DID NOT RPT NOT RAISE SUBJECT DIRECTLY WITH AMBASSADOR DURING THEIR INITIAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 25. HOWEVER, AMBASSADOR DID, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, REITERATE USG POSITION ON EOD FUNDING DURING HIS INITIAL CALL ON GOM MINISTER PUBLIC WORKS SANT SEPTEMBER 27.

5. COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION:IN VIEW FULL EXPLANATION ALREADY GIVEN GOM CONCERNING REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL ORIGINAL OFFER TO FUND EOD TEAM LEADER TRAVEL, AS WELL AS NECESSITY FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF ALL USG COSTS, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO AGREE TO MINTOFF'S REQUEST THAT WE NOW REVERSE DECISION. IF TYPICALLY UNORTHODOX MINTOFFIAN APPROACH TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY ELLSWORTH WERE TO SUCCEED, IT WOULD ONLY REINFORCE MINTOFF'S BELIEF THAT HE NEVER HAS TO TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER. DESPITE FACT THAT EMBASSY ORIGINALLY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE PROVIDE EOD ASSISTANCE TO GOM TO EXTENT POSSIBLE, AT THIS POINT WE BELIEVE BEST COURSE IS BRING PROPOSED USG INVOLVEMENT TO AN END UNLESS GOM WILLING PAY ALL COSTS. THESE WOULD BE MINIMAL IN ANY CASE, AND GOM PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF FUNDING THEM IF IT REALLY ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO EARLIER COMPLETION OF PROJECT. IN SHORT, WE RECOMMEND THAT WE STICK TO OUR GUNS ON THIS ONE. SMITH

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